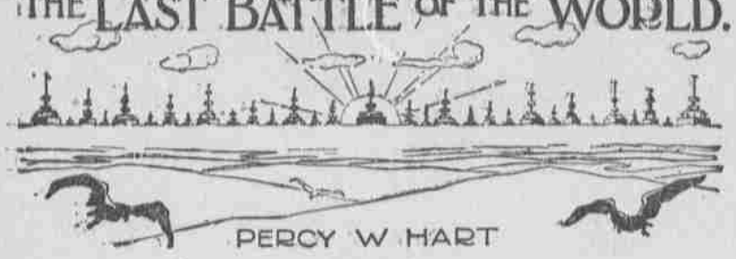
THE LAST BATTLE OF THE WORLD.



IN

THE ILLUSTRATED AMERICAN.

(An editorial criticism on the significant story of "The Last Battle" and its suggestive illustration.)

The reader of Mr. Percy Hart's prophetic dream, entitled "The Last Battle," will doubtless put his first comments in the form of two queries: Could the extinction of war be compassed in such a fashion? And could a death-grapple of the world's fleets result in such absolute annihilation?

On account of the importance of the theme, both the story and the illustration have been submitted to expert criticism. Officers of high rank in the naval service have passed detailed judgment on both.

Indeed, it is only fair to say that the remarkable double-page picture of the battle which is published in this issue of the Illustrated American was drawn by our artist while aboard the flagship New York, during the recent Charleston maneuvers, and under the frequent scrutiny and criticism of the officers of the fleet.

Article 235 of the United States Navy Regulations forbids the quoting of these opinions, but the general tenor of them may be given in a few paragraphs.

Whatever the reply to the second query, there can be little doubt as to the first. Already peace principles are in the ascendant, and quarrels which a generation back would have burst out with blood and fire are now smoothed down by arbitration. In view of the appalling destructiveness of modern war, a death-grapple of the nations would result in such stupendous catastrophes that the world would surely be shocked into lasting peace. This end might be gained by such a battle as Mr. Hart describes, whether the resulting annihilation were complete or only partial.

As to the second query, experts differed. The majority held that annihilation, mutual and utter, would be but a logical result of the collision of such vast destructive forces.

A fighting-machine like the United States ship Indiana explodes about forty thousand pounds of powder every five minutes, under conditions productive of the most deadly effect. She can throw over two hundred shots a minute. Some of these shots, from her 13-inch and 8-inch guns, are each one capable of sinking an opponent miles away, if lucky enough to reach a vital part. At close quarters two such antagonists would be like two duellists knee to knee, each with his pistol at the other's heart.

A high naval authority suggested that there would surely be survivors from "the last battle," but that they would probably be so crippled that they could never make port.

At the opposite extreme was the view of an experienced officer, who held that the difference between ancient and modern war is much exaggerated. Between big guns at long range and bludgeons hand-to-hand there would be about the difference which individual courage always makes. There would be some to fight and some to run away, now as in the brave days of old. And there would be no more approach to annihilation than in any other of the world's great battles.

The middle view, and perhaps the most plausible one, was supported by many who were very competent to speak. The gist of it is as follows:

The ships in each line-of-battle would be about eight hundred yards apart. As the two lines came within range the battle would begin, and each ship steer for its chosen opponent. As the two lines actually met and passed through each other the terrific bombardment at close quarters would doubtless send many ships to the bottom.

The steel turrets are capable of deflecting the heaviest shots that strike them at an angle; but there is always chance of one of these gigantic 13-inch shells coming aboard with a downward rake that no armor ever invented could withstand and literally ripping out the victim's vitals or firing her magazine. Moreover, here and there a torpedo, sent stealthily under the waves, would reach its aim, and a first-class battleship would go down before this unseen but irresistible opponent. And the blind crunching of the relentless ram would account for others.

The remainder would pass on. The majority of these would turn to repeat the maneuver from the opposite direction. But some, though still able to float, would be too much shattered to fight. Their steering-gear might be so damaged that they could not turn about. Or they might have to drift off helplessly out of the maelstrom of ruin, the sport of wind and current. A few days' tinkering would repair some of these so far that they would be able to reach port. And the world would not be left in utter ignorance of the details of "the last battle."

Mr. Russell's drawing shows what might take place in the second melee, when the ships, having once passed through, have turned and rushed again to the encounter. In the left-hand corner of the picture a white ship has been rammed by her black opponent. But she has received the blow so far aft that her floating power may conceivably survive. Her adversary, however, is inevitably doomed, for she is taking the fire of the white ship's 13-inch turret-guns directly into her vitals. Nothing afloat could meet that buffet and live.

In the right-hand corner is a ship still fighting her guns, but stationary and ruinously crippled. The white ship with a huge hole in her side has been pierced by a shell which has exploded after entering. The ship with the battered nose has been struck by shell and afterward rammed in the same spot. The long, black ship on the left, in the middle distance, is one of the reserve line. She has crept in unobserved and unopposed, and every gun is dealing out destruction.

Every ship which has lived through the first melee is, of course, riddled like a tin can, so far as her unarmored portions are concerned. Smoke-stacks, superstructure, military masts, the framework of bow and stern—all that makes her look like a ship—may be shot away; but while her armored vitals are not pierced she will float, and while her turrets—16 inches of tempered steel—are not shattered she can fight.

Thus it comes that certain ships in the picture, which look as if they should be foundering, are still doing deadly work in the battle.

The picture, as a whole, may be taken as a refutation of the views of those critics who would make little of the difference between ancient and modern war.

We are justified in regarding this as a faithful representation of what might take place. No ancient battle would show any such wholesale destruction. Here are huge ships plunging to the bottom or blown in fragments to the skies. Each contains more souls than an average village. Besides the fighting men, who have the madness of battle to nerve them for their fate, there are swarms of workers, who have no such delirium to help them endure the terror and the suspense as they tend the vast machinery in the roaring hell of the ship's bowels. For them, when the blow falls, there is no escape. They go down in their iron dungeons without even a last look at the light of heaven.

There is a daunting horror about all this which none of the most vivid tales of ancient war can match. It would not be difficult to show that in a land engagement the destructiveness of the modern machine-guns would provide a fair parallel, mowing down battalions and annihilating whole divisions in a way that would make Waterloo and Gettysburg seem like play.

One cannot doubt that only a few episodes of even a fiftieth part the horror of the one described would be needed to make the world rise up and cry, "There shall be no more war!"

Sleep.

The composure of mind which it is desirable to secure as a harbinger of sleep is promoted by allowing time, before retiring to rest, for the subsidence of all enforced mental activity. There should be at least an hour's interval between work, no matter what it may be, and sleep, for if work be pushed up to the last moment, sleep will be driven away, or will be, in its first and most precious stages, broken and unrefreshing. To turn resolutely from work at a fixed hour and plunge for a little time into a novel or a newspaper, a game or music, will often make all the difference between a bad and a good night's rest. Position when in bed is a very important factor in the production of sleep. Englishmen traveling on the continent are sometimes puzzled and distressed by insomnia, until they discover that their bodies, propped by enormous, square pillows, are at a much greater angle to the plane of the bed than that in which they are accustomed to repose at home. The substitution of a small pillow for the large one soon disposes of their wakefulness. And so with children. The position in which they are placed when put to bed should be carefully attended to, as nightly variations in this may at least postpone the advent of sleep, which is so essential to the welfare of the growing brains. Very little things serve sometimes to induce sleep. Thus, the mere turning of a pillow and the application of its cold surface to the head and face will, on occasion, prove the turning point in a struggle with sleeplessness.

Mats Locked for Safety.

A Waterbury (Conn.) genius has had his hat stolen or "exchanged" so often that he set his wits at work and has evolved a hat rack for hotels or other semi-public places which effectively prevents theft. It consists of an oak cabinet, with brass mountings, similar to the hat-rack used in large hotels, except that there is a separate compartment for each hat. When a person comes into the hotel he places his hat in one of the compartments and pulls down in front of it a slide similar to that of a roller-top desk. This releases the key, which is otherwise fastened in the lock, and he puts it in his pocket. On leaving the hotel he unlocks his hat, the slide springs up to its place again and "there you are."

Greece is a little larger than one-half of Pennsylvania.

DOG BREAKS UP A HOME.

Woman Makes Trouble by Getting Rid of a Household Pet.

There is great trouble in an Ann Arbor family over a dog—a miserable cur of no pedigree or usefulness, says the Cleveland Plain Dealer. The head of the household has always been a great lover of dogs of all kinds and sizes and about two weeks ago he came home from work one night with a mongrel under his arm that was half black-and-tan and half plain dog. He showed great love for the brute from the instant his eyes first lighted on its leprous-looking form, but, as might be imagined, that love was not shared by the other members of the man's family—that is, by a daughter, a son and a wife. The father would have it that the dog should sleep in the house, the wife disagreed with him and a ruction immediately followed. However, for two weeks the woman put up with the innocent animal but could stand it no longer. One day, when the father and master of the house was out of town, the woman gave the brute into the hands of a neighboring butcher, who agreed to put the animal out of the way for a nominal price. This he did, but what had been a happy home beggars description. When the father returned from work that fatal night he wanted his dog, and when his dog was not forthcoming he set up a mighty howl, saying he would exterminate the entire family if Fido did not put in an appearance before breakfast. But Fido didn't whereupon the man waxed more wroth and swore that such things could not be in his house. He grew angrier and angrier as the following day wore on and when night came he was in condition bordering on insanity. His wife became frightened and his son and daughter, in order to avoid the prospective trouble, said they would not live in a home that fostered such a father. But the father would not be appeased, and, his temper finally getting the better of him, he ordered his son and daughter out of the house simply because they did not agree with him that their mother was a termagant for having made away with the dog. Now the young man is living away from home and the daughter is doing housework in an Ann Arbor family. The wife continues to bear the burden of her husband's temper, but with her there is talk of a divorce. And during all this the dog sleeps on under a mound in the butcher's back yard.

Wine in Paper.

The biggest item of incidental loss in ocean traffic during the stormy seasons of the year is that of breakage in the wine stores. No matter how securely the bottles are fixed in the bins a particularly heavy sea striking the ship in a certain spot or continued rolling and pitching will cause great loss in costly wines that were never intended to wash the floor or the walls. A French firm is going to do away with this old-time source of annoyance and complaint. After years of experimenting it has succeeded in manufacturing a paper bottle which will not break and which has the advantages of the ordinary glass bottle. In the home, too, such bottles would be highly appreciated.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

Lifted by Kites.

Military officers are interested in the experiments of Lieutenant Wise, at Governor's Island in New York harbor, to determine the value of kites as a means of getting an elevated point of view from which to observe the operations of an enemy in the field. By employing four large kites of a peculiar pattern, the united pulling power of which was 400 pounds, when the wind blew 15 miles an hour, Lieutenant Wise recently had himself lifted, with a ring and tackle attached to the kite rope, to a height of about 40 feet from the ground, and there he remained for some time, leisurely examining the surrounding country with a field-glass.

SUPERNATURAL TALE.

MY acquaintance with the De Morts had been a brief one. They had always been a family little known in society, and their residence in the stately park hall made their relationship even more strange with the outside world than might otherwise have been. They never attended any balls, and were seldom seen at the theaters. In fact they seemed to live in a little world of their own, and cared but little for their fellowmen. They had lived in their obscure home for many generations back, and the hall was one of the oldest in that community. In fact, it can be truthfully said that they were little known in that city—Philadelphia.

At the time my story starts I was working in a large wholesale produce house in a dark little street in the north half of Philadelphia. I had been there for some time in the capacity of shipping clerk. Among my fellow-workmen was a young fellow about my own age whose name was Harry Smith, a jolly sort of a chap who seemed to always have a good time. Harry and myself were among the favored, or fortunate, few, who had to work only eight hours a day.

It was one Saturday evening, just as I was preparing to depart, that Harry came up to me and asked what I had to do that evening.

I answered, "nothing."

"Well, then," said Harry, "what's the matter with having a little fun this evening?"

"In what way?" said I.

"We have an invitation to attend a seance at the De Morts," he answered.

"Well, now," said I as I drew my coat on, "if you tell me who the De Morts are and what their seance is, maybe I'll go."

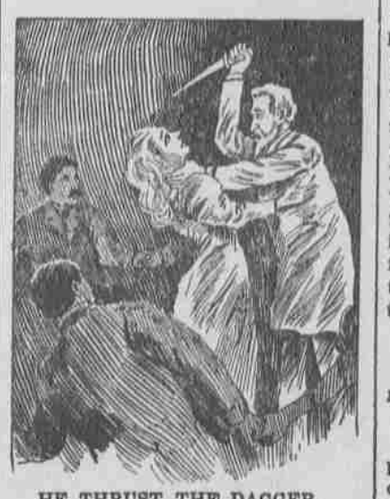
"The De Morts are friends of mine," he said, "and farther than that I'll tell you nothing."

I asked no more questions, but agreed to be ready at 7:30 that evening and go with Harry to his friend's residence.

My rooms were in a small lodging house about a quarter of a mile from my place of employment, and as I walked home I could not help muttering to myself, "De Mort, De Mort."

Finally a light seemed to flash across my mind. Yes, indeed, I knew who they were. I remembered, too, that Harry had introduced me to an Albert D. Mort some three or four months before, and that I had met one or two others of the family, but what he could mean by a seance, I could not comprehend. I did not let the matter trouble me much, however, and it did not take me a great while to eat my supper and change my suit for a better one. Soon I was in my room, and lighting a cigar I stretched myself at full length on a couch to wait the coming of Harry.

At precisely 7:30 my friend walked into my room and told me that a cab was waiting in front of the house. In five minutes we were rolling along the streets of Philadelphia. The De Mort residence was quite a distance from my lodging rooms, and for fully 30 minutes we drove around. Finally the cab stopped, and Hary and myself stepped out just in front of the old gray stone hall.



HE THRUST THE DAGGER.

The hall was in the very midst of a large park filled with stately trees. A servant met us at the door and ushered us into a large drawing room. A good number of people were already assembled there. Although I received an introduction to all of them, I do not remember their names; but what's in a name, anyhow?

The elder De Mort was a stately-looking man of perhaps 50, with very black whiskers, and a cold, piercing eye. He informed us that we must sit in a circle and join hands. We did so, and there being a large number of us, we were strung out around the entire room.

I was surprised when the gentleman himself took a seat by my side and took hold of my right hand. For a moment I noticed nothing unusual, but suddenly I felt as though I had hold of an electric battery. The others must have had the same sensation, too, for they showed it.

In the very center of the circle was a solid oak table, devoid of any cover. Suddenly, a hand, a woman's hand, reached up from under the table and rapped three times. It then vanished, and we all breathlessly waited what next might follow. We did not have to wait long, for the table rose slowly in the air nad floated over our heads toward another room, and furniture generally seemed to be disturbed. I felt a hard rap on my left ear, and looked quickly around to see who might have been so bold but no one was in sight

All was very still for a few moments, but they were few indeed, for we heard a fearful racket, and two chairs came down in our very midst with a bang. Then, upon them there seemed to be a light-blue mist, shapeless, and scarcely visible at first, but it redoubled in brilliancy, and finally assumed the shapes of two human beings; human in shape only, for they were perfectly transparent. They seemed to be talking, and we could even hear a low, murmuring sound, like a whispered consultation. Their voices grew somewhat louder, and assumed an angry tone. Finally one of the forms arose. It was the form of a man, and he grappled his victim, a female, by the throat, in the meantime uttering oaths. She begged and pleaded, but in vain, for he drew a dagger and thrust it to the hilt in her breast, and the blood followed it out, a great torrent flowing down her breast. We all started and screamed, but the figures had vanished, and darkness reigned supreme.

Then, with a rush, every movable article in the house was hurled through the air. Books and chairs flew around our heads at a terrific rate, and I was hit square on the forehead with a brass bound volume. Hidden peals of laughter rent the air, and in vain I tried to break loose from the potent spell, but it was useless.

Light was again restored, but not quiet. The very air seemed filled with demons that flitted to and fro like the rush of angry waters, and mystery and terror reigned supreme.

It overcame us all, and we broke away from the enchanted circle and fled pell-mell over each other in our vain efforts to get away. The demons seemed to follow us with renewed vigor.

I rushed wildly into the front hall and down the broad steps. Harry closely followed me, entreating me to remain, but his pleadings were useless. As soon as I was out once more on the street I summoned a cab and was driven back to my rooms, vowing never again to partake in the supernatural, and I have kept my promise.

AMERICAN LUXURY.

A Rousing Grate Fire a Delight After Europe's Frigid Hotels.

"The thing I especially enjoyed after a somewhat lengthy sojourn on the other side was a genuine American grate fire," commented the traveler, says the Detroit Free Press. "In London I felt as if I was burning something very precious with the landlady charging 6 pence a scuttle for coal. I remember sitting around a stove in an English hotel. The weather was cold and the coal in the stove bunched together. I took a poker and stirred it up.

"'That makes it burn faster,' commented the landlord, gravely.

"'That's just what I want,' I replied.

"A red-faced, hearty Englishman broke in: 'You Americans are deucedly thin-blooded, don't you know.'

"Then in Italy you shiver about all winter and in Germany those big, high crockery stoves never seem to thaw you out. So when I arrived in America in midwinter I had a jolly big fire in the room at my hotel and I piled on the coal, knowing that it would not break my bank, in spite of the prices of the coal trust. But after one had paid 6 pence a scuttle for a mighty little scuttle of coal he does not feel disposed to criticise the trust. I felt like a lord, 'thin-blooded American' though I might be, and was just in the mood to read and apperciate 'The Reveries of a Bachelor.' Those reveries would not seem half so pleasing when read before the smudge of a peat fire in Germany or before the skimpy grate fire of a few pine cones in Italy—not the Italy of sunshine but the Italy of the cold, disagreeable, wet days."

A DECOY COW.

Nebraska Man's Clever Device for Hunting Geese.

John Seivers of Ames, Neb., made a practical test of his hunting device recently and it proved a success, says the Omaha Bee. The device is in the shape of a cow. It is made of canvas, with a steel frame, and can be folded into a small space, except the head and neck. The decoy is operated by two men, one standing in the forelegs and one in the hindlegs, each in a slightly stooping posture. It is painted brown and black, and in such shape that when standing up it cannot be readily distinguished at a distance of 200 yards from a large cow. The front man can see what is going on through a couple of holes in the neck. Recently Mr. Seivers and D. B. Curtis took the decoy out in the field and soon sighted a flock of geese. They put on the decoy and were able to get within less than forty yards before the geese flew. They flew up and slowly settled down about 100 yards away and did not appear to be frightened. The head of the device is hinged to the body and can be dropped by the front man when in shooting distance. The rear man fires through a door near the top and center of the back. Mr. Seiver is well pleased with the success of his device, and has received many inquiries from hunters in regard to it. He expects to have several decoys manufactured.

Changed the Subject.

Adolphus Softleigh—Ah, my dear Miss Edith, you do not dream how many sordid men would seek to marry such an innocent, trusting girl as you are, just for her money. But I hope the man who wins you will love you for your own sweet sake alone. Miss Edith—Indeed, he'll have to. It's my cousin—whose name is the same as mine—who is rich. I haven't a dollar of my own. A. S. (after an awkward pause)—What strange weather we are having lately.—New York Tribune.